

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention relates to novel human *hiwi* protein and genes that encode such proteins. The invention is directed toward the isolation and characterization of human *hiwi* proteins. The invention specifically provides isolated 5 complementary DNA copies of mRNA corresponding a human *hiwi* gene. Also provided are recombinant expression constructs capable of expressing the human *hiwi* gene of the invention in cultures of transformed prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells, as well as such cultures of transformed cells that synthesize the human *hiwi* proteins encoded therein. The invention also provides methods for isolating human 10 hematopoietic stem cells.

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